#HEALTH & FITNESS

How to protect children from Dhaka's scorching summer heat

To call this summer "hot" would be an understatement. Relentlessly oppressive, it seems to be leaving even the kings and the queens of hydration among us gasping for respite. Children, at this time, are particularly vulnerable and require unrelenting supervision and care. It is common knowledge that children do not like drinking water. So, here are a few steps to help them fight dehydration in summer.



Hydration breaks
Give your child plenty of water breaks to ensure they remain hydrated throughout the day. Time-stamped bottles are a good way to ensure they are drinking enough fluid to replace what is lost to sweat. Keeping a count of bottles or glasses is another way to make sure children are drinking enough.

The healthiest drink, of course, is plain water as it ensures solid, pure hydration. Water can also be infused with fruit wedges to add flavour without introducing processed sugar into the body. The next best bet, especially for those who are okay with lactose, is cold milk. It not only hydrates but is also a rich source of calcium, fortifying children's teeth and bones. Fruit juices and powdered drinks are full of sugar, the former still being the healthier option of the two, especially if consumed quickly.

Choosing food with high water content is also a good idea. Watermelon and oranges, and vegetables such as iceberg lettuce, celery, tomatoes, zucchini, spinach and cucumbers all have a lot of water in them, hydrating the body through digestion.

Avoid peak hours
While humidity has no chill at any time of day this summer, the actual heat of the sun is not equally harsh throughout the day. Therefore, it's fair to allow children to stretch their legs in the mornings and in the very late afternoons, provided they wear hats, use sunscreens, and drink well during this time. The humidity can suck out moisture and drain your child, especially if they are very young and very active. Keep children indoors between 10:30 AM and 4:00 PM to avoid heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Restrictive clothing
Tight and dark-coloured clothes are a big no-no for the sort of stuffy weather Dhaka is experiencing. When not in school, children should be kept in light coloured, loose cotton clothes. This ensures that sweat does not stick to their bodies long enough for them to catch summer colds. Sudden changes in temperature should be avoided, such as stepping into a cold, air-conditioned room after being out in the heat for a long time. Similarly, instead of having them jump into the shower as soon as they step in, allow them to cool off naturally first.

Bathing and sunscreen
Daily baths with lukewarm to lightly cool water are good for the little ones to wash off the sweat and grime of the day. It not only helps to relax them but also keeps away the germs they accumulate through the day that can cause itchiness and sweat allergies.

Experiencing heat exhaustion?
Dark coloured urine, headaches, dizziness, confusion, heat intolerance or chills, nausea, looking pale or clammy, rapid heart rate and/or rapid shallow breathing, a lack of appetite (especially with a sugar craving), and elevated body temperature are all signs that your child may be experiencing heat exhaustion.

Take them to a cool place and offer slow, continuous sips of water. Make them comfortable by allowing them to lie down with their feet up. If possible, give them a bath with lukewarm water, or, in the very least, give them a cool compress under the fan. This should be enough for their body temperature to come down, but if none of this works, it is best to take them to the ER for a consultation.

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